

WHA Press Guidance
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VENEZUELA & BOLIVIA: VISAS FOR MILITARY OFFICERS

Q: Do you have any comment regarding reports that three Venezuelan military officers sought refuge in the United States after transiting Bolivia?

A: WE UNDERSTAND THE BOLIVIAN EMBASSY IN CARACAS, VENEZUELA, GRANTED THREE VENEZUELAN MILITARY OFFICERS AND THEIR FAMILIES TEMPORARY REFUGE FOLLOWING THE EVENTS OF APRIL 11 - 14. THE DECISION TO DO THIS WAS MADE BY BOLIVIA ALONE AND WITHOUT CONSULTATION WITH THE UNITED STATES.

LAST WEEK, THE GOVERNMENT OF BOLIVIA INFORMED US THAT THE GROUP WOULD BE LEAVING VENEZUELA FOR BOLIVIA ON SUNDAY, APRIL 28. THE GOVERNMENT OF BOLIVIA STATED THAT THOSE MEMBERS OF THE GROUP WHO HELD U.S. VISAS PLANNED TO TRAVEL ONWARD TO THE UNITED STATES. THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT INQUIRED WHETHER THEY WOULD BE ELIGIBLE TO TRAVEL TO THE UNITED STATES. (We have no knowledge that any Venezuelan military officers have applied recently for U.S. visas in La Paz.)

WE INFORMED THE BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT THAT INDIVIDUALS WITHOUT VISAS WOULD HAVE TO APPLY AT

THE U.S. EMBASSY IN LA PAZ, BOLIVIA IN THE REGULAR MANNER AND WOULD HAVE TO ESTABLISH FULLY THEIR ELIGIBILITY FOR U.S. NON-IMMIGRANT VISAS. WE HAVE NO KNOWLEDGE THAT ANY VENEZUELAN MILITARY OFFICERS HAVE APPLIED RECENTLY FOR U.S. VISAS IN LA PAZ.


Q: Did the U.S. Embassy in La Paz, Bolivia issue visas to any members of the group who may not have already held U.S. visas?

A: I AM NOT IN A POSITION TO COMMENT ON THIS MATTER.

Q: Are these Venezuelan officers and their families in the United States?

A: I WOULD REFER YOUR QUESTION TO THE IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION SERVICE.

[Background: According to the best information we have, three Venezuelan military officers and their families arrived in La Paz, Bolivia on Sunday, April 28 from Caracas, Venezuela. These Venezuelan had sought temporary refuge in the Bolivian Embassy in Caracas following the April 11-14 events that resulted in President Chávez's removal from and subsequent return to power. The Venezuelan Government granted permission for these officers and their families to depart Venezuela for Bolivia.

 We do not know if any of these travelers has arrived in the U.S.]